United Nations S/PV.8075

Security Council

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# Official communiqué of the 8075th (closed) meeting of the Security Council

**Held in private at Headquarters, New York, on Wednesday, 25 October 2017, at 10 a.m.**

In accordance with rule 55 of the provisional rules of procedure of the Security Council, the following communiqué was issued through the Secretary-General in place of a verbatim record:

"At its 8075th meeting, held in private on 25 October 2017, the Security Council considered the item entitled 'Briefing by the President of the International Court of Justice'.

"The President of the Security Council invited Judge Ronny Abraham, President of the International Court of Justice, to participate in the meeting in accordance with rule 39 of the Council's provisional rules of procedure.

"The members of the Council heard a briefing by Judge Abraham.

"The members of the Council and Judge Abraham had an exchange of views."

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United Nations S/PV.8076

# Security Council

Seventy-second year

*Provisional*

**8076**th meeting
Thursday, 26 October 2017, 10 a.m.
New York

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| *President:* | Mr. Delattre | (France) |
| *Members:* | Bolivia (Plurinational State of) | Mr. Inchauste Jordán |
| | China | Mr. Wu Haitao |
| | Egypt | Mr. Aboulatta |
| | Ethiopia | Ms. Guadey |
| | Italy | Mr. Cardi |
| | Japan | Mr. Bessho |
| | Kazakhstan | Mr. Sadykov |
| | Russian Federation | Mr. Nebenzia |
| | Senegal | Mr. Seck |
| | Sweden | Mr. Skoog |
| | Ukraine | Mr. Fesko |
| | United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland | Mr. Rycroft |
| | United States of America | Ms. Sison |
| | Uruguay | Mr. Rosselli |

## Agenda

The situation in the Middle East

This record contains the text of speeches delivered in English and of the translation of speeches delivered in other languages. The final text will be printed in the *Official Records of the Security Council*. Corrections should be submitted to the original languages only. They should be incorporated in a copy of the record and sent under the signature of a member of the delegation concerned to the Chief of the Verbatim Reporting Service, room U-0506 (verbatimrecords@un.org). Corrected records will be reissued electronically on the Official Document System of the United Nations (http://documents.un.org).

17-34683 (E)

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*The meeting was called to order at 10.05 a.m.*

**Adoption of the agenda**

*The agenda was adopted.*

**The situation in the Middle East**

**The President** (*spoke in French*): In accordance with rule 39 of the Council's provisional rules of procedure, I invite Mr. Staffan de Mistura, Special Envoy of the Secretary-General for Syria, to participate in this meeting.

Mr. De Mistura is joining us via video-teleconference from Geneva.

I now give the floor to Mr. De Mistura.

**Mr. De Mistura**: Let me update the Security Council on developments and lay out some of the plans that we have for the next round of the intra-Syrian talks in Geneva. I shall then brief the Council on some of the other potential initiatives.

We are seeing very significant developments in the fight against United Nations-proscribed terrorists in Syria. Raqqa has been liberated by the United States-led coalition and Mayadin by the Syrian Government and its allies. Action continues to eliminate the remaining Da'esh pockets in Deir ez-Zor. By and large, the deconfliction among the parties fighting Da'esh is working so far, but we also see Da'esh retreating into the desert and launching brutal assymetric attacks in and near Damascus. Without an inclusive political process, there is a real threat that Da'esh or similar entities could return and exploit the feelings of marginalization and grievance. That is why we need a political process.

On another note, it is also clear that some recent public ceremonies in Raqqa did not send the right signal — indeed, they sent the wrong signal — about inclusion.

Meanwhile, apart from the south-west, where via the Amman arrangements the overall level of violence remains reduced, despite some flashpoints in Bayt Jinn, we are receiving numerous reports of heavy shelling and even air strikes in Idlib and Hama. This might be attributed to the actions of Tahrir al-Sham/Al-Nusra, but in other areas — eastern Ghouta, southern Damascus and the Rastan triangle — there has been a trend of re-escalation rather than de-escalation, whichwe fear might intensify if energies are directed away from fighting Da'esh to somewhere else.

Let me also register my concern that we are not seeing any increased humanitarian access in the de-escalation areas and elsewhere, as we had wished. But I will leave it to my colleague Mark Lowcock to refer to that in due time. As the Council is aware, we have seen some shocking images, which we cannot independently verify, allegedly emerging in the past few days from eastern Ghouta. Again, I will leave that for Mr. Lowcock to elaborate on.

The desired improvements in humanitarian access therefore continue to elude us, owing to many factors: the ongoing fighting in some areas, bureaucratic impediments and interference by parties to the conflict. Those with influence must work to enable the United Nations and its partners to deliver assistance by whatever modalities are available — cross-line, cross-border or regular programmes.

With a genuine sense of civic duty and commitment to support their own fellow Syrians, we are constantly hearing messages coming from civil-society organizations, which are continuing to express alarm at the impact of the conflict on the protection of civilians who are still being affected, including the killing of civilians and a lack of humanitarian access. We all share that concern, which is the reason I share it. Again, I will leave it to Mr. Lowcock.

It is therefore a very mixed picture. Terrorism is on the defensive, but it will not be defeated by military means alone. De-escalation arrangements are sometimes being seriously challenged, but they are working. The next Astana meeting should therefore focus on putting the existing de-escalation arrangements back on track and on finalizing the establishment of a proper monitoring system. That is vital in order to see real action on the humanitarian front as well.

Let me now turn to the political process. Let us recall that, first, any de-escalation or any other arrangement must be interim in nature and should not lead to the de facto "soft" partitioning of Syria.

Secondly, the United Nations remains committed to the sovereignty, territorial integrity and unity of Syria, as do all Council members. Our goal is the realization of a truly nationwide ceasefire and a political process to advance the implementation of the Geneva communiqué (S/2012/522, annex) and resolution 2254 (2015).

Thirdly, the Security Council has clearly mandated the United Nations — through me as the Special Envoy of the Secretary-General and of the Council — to convene and advance the intra-Syrian political negotiation process for a political solution to the conflict, and no one else. I have therefore been carefully preparing a new round of talks. I was in Moscow last week to see Russian Federation Foreign Minister Sergey Lavrov and Defence Minister Shoygu, as well as in Brussels to see the European Union High Representative for Foreign and Security Policy, Federica Mogherini, and discuss with her possibilities for how the Brussels conference in the spring could support the political process — which I hope will be well established by that time. Also, yesterday in Washington, D.C., I met with the United States National Security Advisor, Mr. McMaster, and I have just come to brief the Council following a meeting with United States Secretary of State Tillerson here in Geneva. That is why I must apologize to the Council for not being able to be there in person. I also consulted with the Secretary-General earlier this week while in New York and received very clear guidance. I am now engaging with a range of other contacts, including with Syrian and regional players.

Accordingly, I wish to indicate to the Council — in fact, announce — my intention to convene the eighth round of intra-Syrian talks in Geneva on 28 November. I will continue to consult everyone concerned in that regard prior to that date. We intend to hold formal plenary meetings as well as technical discussions over a period of time. The work plan for the eighth round in Geneva will be framed by resolution 2254 (2015) and the four baskets, which each need to find an expression in the framework agreement to realize a transitional political process in implementing resolution 2254 (2015). I have asked for focus and realism because we need to get the parties into real negotiations over items where there is some prospect that they could begin to narrow the gap and really negotiate.

Applying that logic, my considered assessment as the mediator is that for the eighth around — and I would like to ask the Council's support on this — we should see if we can move some aspects of the agenda concretely forward, far beyond just exploration, and enter into negotiation. Specifically, in my opinion, in the eighth round we should focus on two main points: first, the schedule and process for drafting a new constitution and, secondly, but not necessarily in that order, the precise requirements for United Nations-supervised elections as per resolution 2254 (2015). Negotiations should then be informed by the overall framework of resolution 2254 (2015), as I already said, and by the existing 12 essential principles. In that regard, I am ready to put to the parties initial thoughts as a starting point for serious negotiations.

I also believe that the time has come for a serious step on detainees, abductees and missing persons. I genuinely hope that could emerge from the next Astana meeting. Indeed, we have already made some advance suggestions on how to build on it. We need to continue to push for progress however we can, as that is probably one of the most important confidence-building measures that Syrians, thousands of them, would like to hear.

As we focus on negotiations on those two key points — United Nations-supervised elections as per resolution 2254 (2015) and the constitution — we must continue discussions in preparation for negotiations on all baskets, including 1 and 4. It is hard to see how that could in fact proceed without looking at it in the context of resolution 2254 (2015).

We will also do everything possible to ensure that we draw on the best contributions of civil society, through the civil society support room we have here in Geneva, and utilize women's contributions and a gender perspective, including via the women's advisory board, especially on the two main issues for the negotiations in the eighth round, which I just mentioned.

I need the Council's support to move ahead based on what I have said here; let me first indicate in which areas. We hope to see a successful focus meeting in Astana on 30 and 31 October. In that regard, I already flagged the challenges to the de-escalation arrangements and the importance of advancing the detainee file. We must also ensure that humanitarian mine action moves forward. We have a common interest in preventing the further unravelling of the interim de-escalation and ceasefire arrangements that have been put in place. That is what Astana was always meant to be about, and that is what we want, and hope, they will fully achieve.

Secondly, those with influence over the Government should now exercise that influence and focus on how to ensure that it comes to Geneva ready to negotiate. I particularly raised those points in details in my meetings in Moscow — quite intensely.

Thirdly, we need to see a successful second meeting in Riyadh — soon, and ideally before the next Geneva meetings. We will continue to coordinate on that. We have now heard about the fact that that initiative is actually likely to take place. We sincerely hope that the initiaive, originated by the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia in the key meeting in Riyadh of 2015, will be followed-up when Saudi Arabia hosts the second meeting of the opposition in Riyadh. We hope that it proceeds accordingly. It would be a mistake if we think that time is on our side. The best way to proceed requires intensified engagement among the key players in support of the Geneva process. Let me say that advocates of Syrians' women's rights are calling for a minimum of 30 per cent representation in the delegations of both the Government and the opposition as negotiators. As I always do, I urge the Syrian parties and international supporters to strongly support that call.

Fourthly, let us remember the regional and international dimensions of Syria. I am doing my best as the mediator to consult a large number of groups and focus international discussions on how to concretely support the Geneva process. Frankly, I welcome any suggestions from the Council on how that can be done. In that regard, I welcome initiatives through which the international community could come together in supporting the efforts of the United Nations.

Finally, I wish to bring to the Council's attention the fact that, when I was in Moscow, the Russian Federation briefed me regarding their own initiative to convene a large gathering of Syrians in Syria at the Russian air base in Khmeimim in the near future. Perhaps we may hear more about that during our closed consultations, including from the Permanent Representative of Russia. I look forward to hearing that, as well as the views of other members of the Council. In looking at Riyadh, at Astana and at anything else, my focus is always the same. Does it help to advance the United Nations-led process in Geneva, as laid out in resolution 2254 (2015), or not? Here are some bottom lines.

First, it is time to move forward on the political track. It is really a plastic special moment. Let us use it. After Raqqa and Deir ez-Zor, I used to say, as the Council probably remembers, that there would be a moment of truth. Now is the moment of truth. Next week in Astana could be crucial for the stabilization of the de-escalation areas. Secondly, those with influence over the Government should use it in order to get them ready to negotiate substance in Geneva. Thirdly, the same applies to those with influence over the opposition. The meeting of the opposition in Riyadh should take place as soon as possible and lead to a constructive and proactive outcome. Fourthly, we need active international engagement in support of the Geneva process. Fifthly, the eighth round of talks is planned for 28 November. We will try to move into real negotiations on the constitution and elections supervised by the United Nations, as laid out in resolution 2254 (2015). In parallel, we should, of course, keep exploring the issue of governance and terrorism. We should look at any initiative by virtue of whether it contributes to the United Nations-led political process in Geneva, which the Council has mandated me to pursue on behalf of the Secretary-General and the Council.

That is my summary of, if I can put it this way, a bottom line wish list.

**The President** (*spoke in French*) I thank Mr. De Mistura for his briefing.

I shall now give the floor to those members of the Security Council who wish to make statements.

**Mr. Rosselli** (Uruguay) (*spoke in Spanish*): We are in a typical pattern whereby we are usually just about the only ones to take the floor during open meetings. I would like to congratulate you, Sir, for holding today's open briefing. We had spent far too long in a closed format in the little room next to the Chamber, where not very much happened.

I think it proper that, as the Security Council, we always deal with facts and reality. In recent months, the reality on the ground has changed. Although there are still continued acts of violence and military operations taking place in Syria, it is notable that the situation on the ground has changed. There are zones of de-escalation. We note that terrorist groups are losing power. For example, Da'esh was expelled from Raqqa, and soon may also be expelled soon from Deir ez-Zor.

It is also clear that that has meant that the Syrian Government clearly has the upper hand on the ground over the tens of armed groups and coalitions with which it has had military confrontations since 2011. Therefore, the current reality means that we have to act on the basis of those facts. Otherwise, whatever we do will not be useful. In that regard, let me say that we remain convinced that there is no military solution to the crisis in Syria. Therefore, more than ever before, the negotiation processes are fundamental.

Once more, we would like to pay tribute to the tireless work of Mr. Staffan de Mistura and his entire team. Over and over again, they do not cease in working to take into account developments on the ground, as well as developments in the views and feelings of all actors. They always seek new areas and build on existing areas in which they can move forward the process of negotiation.

Mr. De Mistura has just told us, and we commend him, that he is taking a calculated risk in convening the eighth round of talks on 28 November. It shows great ambition. Mr. De Mistura wants to discuss substance and concentrate on two specific points: the constitutional process and the electoral process. Those are central elements laid out in resolution 2254 (2015), but perhaps the new political reality on the ground might in some way facilitate the groups coming to really incorporate the need to sit around a table and negotiate on issues of substance. In that regard, the efforts mentioned by Mr. De Mistura, including the requests made to Governments and to the opposition to take such a step, must be fully supported by the Council. I would also hope that the second round of meetings in Riyadh will be a success so that we really can see a united opposition speaking with one voice, rather than a cacophony of various groups that often express contradictory points of view.

I am very much improvising regarding notes that were well prepared, but having listened to what Mr. De Mistura has said I must take into account the new elements of the situation that he has explained to us. Let me say once again that we have full confidence in his efforts. The Security Council must meet its obligations, firmly support Mr. De Mistura and his team, and ensure that all actors in this crisis hear the Council's opinion that the only way to resolve the situation is through political negotiations.

**The President** (*spoke in French*): There are no more names inscribed on the list of speakers.

I now invite Council members to informal consultations to continue our discussion on the subject.

*The meeting rose at 10.30 a.m.*

United Nations S/PV.8077

# Security Council

Seventy-second year

*Provisional*

**8077**th meeting
Thursday, 26 October 2017, 3 p.m.
New York

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|---|---|---|
| *President:* | Mr. Delattre | (France) |
| *Members:* | Bolivia (Plurinational State of) | Mr. Inchauste Jordán |
| | China | Mr. Shen Bo |
| | Egypt | Mr. Kandeel |
| | Ethiopia | Mr. Alemu |
| | Italy | Mr. Cardi |
| | Japan | Mr. Kawamura |
| | Kazakhstan | Mr. Sadykov |
| | Russian Federation | Mr. Iliichev |
| | Senegal | Mr. Seck |
| | Sweden | Mr. Skoog |
| | Ukraine | Mr. Vitrenko |
| | United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland | Mr. Allen |
| | United States of America | Ms. Sison |
| | Uruguay | Mr. Bermúdez |

## Agenda

Security Council mission

Briefing by Security Council mission to the Sahel region (19 to 22 October 2017)

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17-34697 (E)

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*The meeting was called to order at 3.10 p.m.*

**Adoption of the agenda**

*The agenda was adopted.*

**Security Council mission**

**Briefing by Security Council mission to the Sahel region (19 to 22 October 2017)**

**The President** (*spoke in French*): The Security Council will now begin its consideration of the item on its agenda.

At this meeting, the Security Council will hear briefings by the co-leads of the Security Council mission to the Sahel region from 19 to 22 October, namely, Ethiopia, Italy and France.

I shall now make a statement in my capacity as the representative of France.

At the outset, I should like to convey our deep condolences to the United Nations Multidimensional Integrated Stabilization Mission in Mali (MINUSMA) and the Government of Chad, following the attack on a convoy that led to the loss of life of three Chadian Blue Helmets today in northern Mali. The Security Council paid its respects to the memory of the Blue Helmets who died in the line of duty during its visit, and we do so again today. We also convey the same condolences to the Governments of the countries of the Group of Five for the Sahel (G-5 Sahel), whose people and security forces are regularly subjected to often deadly terrorist attacks.

The Security Council conducted a field mission to the Sahel from 19 to 22 October, during which it visited Mali, Mauritania and Burkina Faso. The visit was jointly led by France, Ethiopia and Italy and was part of the Security Council's close monitoring of the issue of the joint force of the Group of Five for the Sahel (G-5 Sahel). One of the goals of the visit, which began the day after the issuance of the report on the operationalization of the Joint Force (S/2017/869), was to provide the members of the Council with a first-hand assessment of the situation on the ground and an opportunity exchange views with the various actors on the ground of the Secretary-General's recommendations aimed at strengthening international support for the Joint Force. We focused in particular on the implementation of the Agreement on Peace and Reconciliation in Mali, in line with the Council's conviction that there can be no lasting stability in the Sahel without effective, comprehensive and inclusive implementation of the provisions of the Agreement.

It should be noted that the Peace and Security Council of the African Union, which was officially invited to participate in the visit, was unable to send a representative because of its heavy workload at that time. Nonetheless, the Chairperson of the Peace and Security Council expressed his great appreciation for the courtesy shown by the Security Council and indicated the Peace and Security Council's full willingness to participate in future visits. It seems to us that such a practice should be encouraged.

In keeping with the division of labour that we adhered to during the visit itself, I will provide an update on the visit to Mali, before giving the floor to my colleagues from Italy and Ethiopia, who will provide briefings on the segments of the field visits to Mauritania and Burkina Faso, respectively. We will each conclude our briefings by sharing the main lessons that we learned from the visit overall.

In Mali, the Security Council met with President Ibrahim Boubacar Keita and several Government ministers, all of whom unanimously reaffirmed their country's commitment to making the Joint Force fully operational as quickly as possible. The visit to the Joint Force headquarters, located in Sévaré, in central Mali, allowed us to see that it is up and running. Much has been done in a short period of time in order to make the Joint Force operational. I refer in particular to the fact that the Joint Force has already achieved its initial operational capability and that the command post for the Central Sector in Niamey has been established, as well as to the high quality of the G-5 officers in command, not to mention the fact that it will be deploying its first operational mission in the next few days.

Our discussions with the Special Representative of the Secretary-General and the MINUSMA Force Commander allowed us to identify, from among the elements contained in the options submitted by the Secretary-General, those that could be achieved in the short term and that would need to be preceded by a strengthening of MINUSMA's capacity and therefore could only be implemented further down the line.

Our discussions with the representatives of the French Operation Barkhane and the European operations — the European Union Training Mission and European Union Capacity-building Mission in

Mali — allowed us to better understand the activities of the other international security forces present in the area and to assess their mutual complementarity. In particular, it became apparent that the force generation for the G-5 Sahel Joint Force was intended to enable MINUSMA and Operation Barkhane to implement their mandates.

With regard to the peace process in Mali, a meeting with members of the Monitoring Committee of the Agreement on Peace and Reconciliation in Mali was an opportunity for the Malian authorities to share the progress that had recently been made in the implementation of the provisions of the Agreement. In a joint document, the signatory groups deplored a lack of consultation with them on the part of the Government on this issue. In response to these statements, on behalf of the entire Council, I reiterated the strong message that we conveyed in our press statement on Mali issued on 6 October (SC/13019) by stressing the Council's expectation that concrete progress would be achieved by the end of the year. This message was supported by the Algerian presidency of the Monitoring Committee and by the representative of the African Union.

We held two meetings with representatives of civil society — one in Bamako and one in Mopti — that allowed us to directly address the concerns of the Malian population. They emphasized the desire of women to be more involved in the practical implementation of the peace agreement, and in particular to be better represented in the institutions responsible for monitoring its implementation, as well as the weariness of the population in the centre of the country with regard to the security threat it faces on a daily basis and its wish that the influence of terrorist groups in the region be combatted.

Finally, we also took part in a ceremony honouring the 146 peacekeepers of MINUSMA who have died while serving their mandate, which was held at the MINUSMA memorial in Bamako. Regrettably, there are now 149. It was an emotional time for the Mission and the Council delegation, and it led us to conclude that it was a good practice which should be observed during each Council visit to a country hosting a peacekeeping operation.

I now resume my functions as President of the Security Council.

I now give the floor to Ambassador Cardi.

**Mr. Cardi** (Italy) (*spoke in French*): I associate myself with the sincere condolences conveyed by the President in the light of the loss of life of three Chadian soldiers deployed to the United Nations Multidimensional Integrated Stabilization Mission in Mali (MINUSMA) who died, which is a reminder of the difficulties faced by peacekeeping operations throughout the world.

During its visit to the Sahel, the Security Council visited Mauritania on 20 October. Upon arriving in Nouakchott, the members of the Security Council were received by the President of the Islamic Republic of Mauritania, Mr. Mohamed Ould Abdel Aziz. He was joined by a large delegation comprised of, among others, the Minister for Foreign Affairs, the Minister of Defence, the Minister for the Economy, the Chief of Staff of the Army, the Chief of Staff of the President of Republic and the Permanent Representative of Mauritania to the United Nations. The Security Council then visited the permanent headquarters of the Group of Five of the Sahel (G-5 Sahel) to meet with Mr. Najim Elhadj Mohamed, Permanent Secretary of the G-5 Sahel. Our discussions with the Mauritanian authorities allowed Council members to acquire critical analytical information, which allowed us to to pursue our reflections on the G-5 Sahel Joint Force and to expand our understanding of the security environment in the Sahel.

Mauritania, a key player within the G-5 Sahel and in the broader Sahel region, has long been fully involved in efforts of the G-5 Sahel's joint activities to combat terrorism and instability in the region. During our discussions with President Ould Abdel Aziz, the Security Council heard confirmation of the Mauritanian authorities' resolve to defeat and stamp out terrorism. Given the country's history on the front lines of the battle against this scourge, the Mauritanian authorities are well placed to assess the terrorist phenomenon, its expansion across the region over the years, its close links with illegal trafficking, its influence on the political agendas of the countries in the Sahel, and the need to combat this phenomenon not only with a security response, but also by using counter-narrative tools to deter radicalization. All of this was very enlightening for Council members.

Throughout our open dialogue, our interlocutors openly expressed their hopes of seeing the Security Council ensure robust support for the G-5 Sahel Joint Force. According to Mauritanian authorities, that

initiative, owing to its proactive stance against the terrorist threat and its mission to entrench its security capabilities in the Sahelian region, meets the priority and strategic demands for the countries of the region and deserves the full support of the United Nations and international community.

The motto appearing on the banner of the G-5 Sahel is "Security and Development". Accordingly, discussions with the Permanent Secretary of the G-5 Sahel, Mr. Najim Elhadj Mohamed were focused on those two dimensions. During a meeting in which the security vision was aligned with the goals of growth and development — which is the other pillar of the G-5 Sahel architecture — Mr. Mohamed told members of the Security Council that, in line with those ambitions, development must "immediately precede, follow and consolidate security activities in the region".

That premise is embodied in a development and security strategy whose principal components were illustrated to the members of the Council and that encompasses the priority investment plan, which the G-5 Sahel considers key to promoting growth in the Sahel and which will, of course, require significant international resources. Moreover, the meeting with the Permanent Secretary focused on the need to coordinate the work of various platforms focused on the Sahel, such as the United Nations Integrated Strategy for the Sahel, with the specific demands and priorities of the countries of the region.

The messages we heard during our visit to Mauritania confirmed the shared aspirations of that country to build around the G-5 Sahel a security and development architecture for the region, with the Joint Force at its core. That observation was corroborated by the convergent messages addressed to the Security Council by its interlocutors, through which the various countries underscored the increasing insecurity in a region shaken by terrorism, illegal trafficking in persons, arms and drugs, and anaemic development. I believe that henceforth we should find common ground so as to strengthen support for the Force, which we hope — and I am speaking here in my national capacity — to be able to meet the ambitious goals of the countries of the region.

As a co-leader of the mission, I would like to conclude by sincerely thanking you, Sir, for having taken the initiative of organizing this visit under your presidency, which confers very significant added value to the discussions on the G-5 Sahel Joint Force and the Sahel region that have been held over the past several months. I should also like to add that we highly appreciated the work of the presidency, as main co-lead, in assuring the visibility of other colleagues and sharing the responsibilities associated with the mission. I also thank the host countries — Mali, Mauritania and Burkino Faso — which gave the Council in a warm and friendly welcome. I also thank the United Nations personnel based in New York who travelled with us, in particular the staff of MINUSMA and Special Representative Annadif, for their outstanding efforts to ensure the complete success of the visit.

**The President** (*spoke in French*): I thank Ambassador Cardi for his briefing.

I give the floor to Ambassador Alemu.

**Mr. Alemu** (Ethiopia): I want to join you, Sir, and the representative of Italy in expressing our solidarity with Chad and in condemning the terrorist attack in northern Mali. What took place highlights the reason why the mission went to the region. It also highlights the need once again for robust international cooperation.

I wish to express our deep appreciation to the French presidency for its initiative to organize the Security Council mission to States of the Group of Five for the Sahel (G-5 Sahel). The visit to three of the G-5 Sahel countries — Mali, Mauritania and Burkina Faso — was not only very successful, but also an eye-opener. In our view, the visit undoubtedly has helped confirm the value of Security Council missions. In fact, we already knew the extent to which the situation faced by the G-5 Sahel States was grim, but seeing is believing. It is impossible to deny the particular and critical challenges that some of the countries are facing. What is needed is an urgent response, both from the Security Council and the international community, before the tipping point is reached.

The margin between where they are now and the tipping point is razor-thin. What could give relief to the G-5 Sahel countries is a holistic approach with a purview covering climate change, environmental issues and general development matters. There is simply no gainsaying the fact that the absolute prevalence of insecurity caused by terrorism and trafficking in drugs and persons, which fuel terrorism, have become scourges that those countries are hardly in a position to contain, let alone reverse, without the support of the international community. Therefore, the fact that there

is an urgent need for practical solidarity with those countries is self-evident. Failure to come up with an appropriate positive response would be disastrous and have huge implications for the international community, and that is also obvious.

The readiness of the G-5 Sahel States to do their share and discharge their responsibilities is also undeniable. In all three countries, the Security Council mission was received with open arms and was able to talk with the relevant officials, including their respective Heads of State and Government, who were not frugal with their time.

I should like to turn to the last leg of the trip, in Burkina Faso, which I had the privilege of leading. It was very symbolic of the purpose of our mission that we headed for Ouagadougou from the governorate of Mopti, in central Mali, where our last meeting was held with a representative of civil society. It brought home to us, in a very saddening manner, the extent to which the people of the region feel that they have no security — even when going to the market. The Government of Burkina Faso made the point of highlighting why we were there by taking us immediately upon our arrival to the site of the 13 August terrorist attack, in which 19 people were killed and 22, including security personnel, were wounded. The Homeland Security Minister received us there and subsequently stayed with us until the end of our visit.

Although the initial plan was to directly hold discussions with the President of the Republic, we had an opportunity to interact with his Cabinet Ministers, which was coordinated by the Foreign Minister. The Cabinet Ministers briefed Council members on how the security crisis in the neighbouring Republic of Mali to the north is affecting social and economic development in the already long-neglected part of Burkina Faso. They recounted the deliberate and targeted burning of schools and the killing and intimidation of teachers by terrorists and transnational criminals. We were told that 13 schools and two higher-level training institutions were not able to provide services because they were either totally destroyed or burned down. Terrorists, they said, were working around the clock to end the presence of service providers with the objective of undermining State authority.

The Ministers also emphasized that terrorist attacks had been increasing in frequency during 2016 and 2017, including through the use of improvised explosive devices as well as other makeshift mines, which are usually very difficult to detect. They told us that more than 100 people had been killed in about 18 attacks in different parts of the country, mostly in the North. They underlined the fact that more than 85 per cent of those attacks came directly from Mali. The Minister of Homeland Security described the Burkina Faso, Mali and Niger border triangle, in particular, as highly volatile.

One salient matter that should not be overlooked is how well organized and methodical the Burkinabé leadership is. It has a strategy for addressing the challenge that the country and the region are facing. Council members were briefed on what the Government is doing to address the menace of terrorism, including through efforts to eliminate conditions that are conducive to terrorism and the activities of traffickers and transnational criminals, with a focus on the Sahelian region of the country. In that connection, the Minister of Economy stressed that a separate policy and socioeconomic development strategy and plan are being prepared to address the crushing inequality in the Sahelian region. She also emphasized that as far as its resources allowed, the country was building the capacity of its security forces by ensuring access to adequate equipment and training and providing reasonably effective administrative services in every part of the country, with special focus on the remote northern and north-eastern border areas. However, she also said that the burden has been too heavy, the negative impact on the economy has been huge and the need for international cooperation is critical.

Council members then held a fruitful interactive dialogue with the President, who said that the only way that they will be able to succeed in the fight against the challenges of terrorism is through coordination with other countries of the region. He emphasized the importance of the Joint Force of the G-5 Sahel and how critical it has become to their efforts, the same narrative that we heard both in Mali and Mauritania. He also informed us that his Government was actively participating in establishing strategic security corridors based on the shared objective of defeating terrorism.

With respect to the four options forwarded by the Secretary-General, the President made it clear that his choice is option one. He argued that after the Force's operationalization they would need sustainable and determined support. In terms of the challenges his country faces, he emphasized that every country of

the region, not just his own, suffers from the generally porous borders, which have become convenient for terrorists and criminals. He said that there was no alternative to the Joint Force of the G-5 Sahel, urged for its speedy deployment and appealed to the Council for meaningful support as soon as possible. He underlined the importance of establishing a sustainable funding mechanism and creating a dedicated support office to be financed through United Nations assessed contributions. He reminded Council members that the problem of the Sahel region is an international crisis that should receive international attention and an international response.

In conclusion, as I said at the beginning, the visit was both timely and very necessary. The countries of the Group of Five for the Sahel have shown that they are determined to carry the burden of the problem as far as their capacity allows. Each has already made a first contribution of €10 million. Our visit to the Force headquarters in Sévaré showed us the degree of its readiness to get up and get going. The infrastructure there is ready, but there is a great need for support, and there can be no arguing that it is a need that the Security Council and the international community have a responsibility to respond to. I should add that we constantly reminded our interlocutors of the value of ownership and action on their part, in line with what is stated in the Mission's terms of reference.

**The President** (*spoke in French*): I thank Ambassador Alemu for his briefing.

I shall now make some concluding remarks in my capacity as the representative of France.

As this meeting draws to an end, and in full agreement what has been said, I believe that I have good reason for saying that the Security Council's visit to the Sahel came at a particularly timely moment in terms of its work with regard to the Joint Force of the Group of Five for the Sahel (G-5 Sahel) and was both useful and productive. For our part, we took away three main lessons from the field visit. The first is that the authorities of the three countries we visited unanimously underscored their political commitment to ensuring the quickest possible operationalization of the Force, together with a strong and clear call for increased international support, bilateral and multilateral. That political mobilization has been accompanied by significant progress on the Force's deployment on the ground, as has been mentioned. It will be important to ensure that in Mali it is accompanied by tangible progress in implementing the Agreement for Peace and Reconciliation in Mali, as was conveyed to the Malians during the visit.

The second lesson is that the our visit gave us an opportunity to emphasize the unanimous support of Council members to the Joint Force. The Force is seen as an essential response to the transnational nature of the security threat facing the States of the Sahel, but also as a complement to the United Nations Multidimensional Integrated Stabilization Mission in Mali (MINUSMA) and Operation Barkhane that will enable them to create an environment in which they can better execute their mandates. What we pointed out — and the members of the G-5 Sahel share our view — is that the Joint Force's security response, however crucial, must absolutely meet expectations in terms of respect for human rights and must be complemented by development efforts on the ground to ensure that it is not counterproductive.

The third lesson is that the real debate is no longer about whether the Joint Force is relevant or even whether we should be strengthening international support for the Force, but about how that support should be calibrated. Next Monday's Security Council meeting, which will be presided over by Mr. Jean-Yves Le Drian, France's Minister for Europe and Foreign Affairs, is being convened to tackle that very question through our discussion of the best way to strengthen the international community's support for the Joint Force of the G-5 Sahel. In our national capacity, we will express our hope that we will be able to give the Joint Force the support it needs right now while taking account of the differing points of view of those around the Council table.

I now resume my functions as President of the Council.

Before we adjourn the meeting, on behalf of the Council I should like to express our appreciation to the authorities of Mali, Mauritania and Burkina Faso for their very warm welcome to us. I would also like to thank all of my colleagues on the Security Council, especially those from Italy and Ethiopia, for the genuine team spirit that was the hallmark of the mission.

Last but not least, I would especially like to thank the entire Secretariat team who worked to organize and ensure the success of the visit, both in New York and on the ground. I refer in particular not only to the

Security Council Affairs Division, but also to the teams in the Department of Peacekeeping Operations and the Department of Political Affairs, MINUSMA, the Resident Coordinators in Mauritania and Burkina Faso, our interpreters and security officers — in other words, everyone who was involved. Their work was truly exemplary, and they played a key role in the success of this visit. On behalf of all of us, I am deeply grateful to them.

*The meeting rose at 3.40 p.m.*

United Nations S/PV.8078

# Security Council

Seventy-second year

*Provisional*

**8078**th meeting
Thursday, 26 October 2017, 3.45 p.m.
New York

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| *President*: | Mr. Delattre | (France) |
| *Members*: | Bolivia (Plurinational State of) | Mr. Llorentty Solíz |
| | China | Mr. Shen Bo |
| | Egypt | Mr. Kandeel |
| | Ethiopia | Mr. Alemu |
| | Italy | Mr. Biagini |
| | Japan | Mr. Kawamura |
| | Kazakhstan | Mr. Sadykov |
| | Russian Federation | Mr. Iliichev |
| | Senegal | Mr. Seck |
| | Sweden | Mr. Skau |
| | Ukraine | Mr. Vitrenko |
| | United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland | Mr. Allen |
| | United States of America | Ms. Sison |
| | Uruguay | Mr. Bermúdez |

## Agenda

Reports of the Secretary-General on the Sudan and South Sudan

Report of the Secretary-General on the situation in Abyei (S/2017/870 and S/2017/870/Corr.1)

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*The meeting was called to order at 3.45 p.m.*

**Adoption of the agenda**

*The agenda was adopted.*

**Reports of the Secretary-General on the Sudan and South Sudan**

**Report of the Secretary-General on the situation in Abyei (S/2017/870 and S/2017/870/Corr.1)**

**The President** (*spoke in French*): In accordance with rule 37 of the Council's provisional rules of procedure, I invite the representatives of South Sudan and the Sudan to participate in this meeting.

In accordance with rule 39 of the Council's provisional rules of procedure, I invite the following briefers to participate in this meeting: Mr. Alexander Zouev, Assistant Secretary-General for Rule of Law and Security Institutions of the Department of Peacekeeping Operations, and Mr. Nicholas Haysom, Special Envoy of the Secretary-General for the Sudan and South Sudan.

The Security Council will now begin its consideration of the item on its agenda.

I wish to draw the attention of Council members to documents S/2017/870 and S/2017/870/Corr.1, which contain the report of the Secretary-General on the situation in Abyei.

I now give the floor to Mr. Zouev.

**Mr. Zouev**: I thank you, Mr. President, for this opportunity to brief the Security Council on the situation in Abyei and the ongoing efforts to support the implementation of the agreement between the Government of the Sudan and the Sudan People's Liberation Movement on temporary arrangements for the administration and security of the Abyei Area of 20 June 2011. I shall also provide an update on the status of the Joint Border Verification and Monitoring Mechanism, as requested in resolution 2352 (2017).

Conflict in the Abyei Area continues to follow four patterns. First, the traditional source of conflict between the Ngok Dinka and Misseriya continues to be the issue of access to grazing land and water. The conflict prevention and mitigation strategy adopted by the United Nations Interim Security Force for Abyei (UNISFA) has been effective in reducing large-scale violence. The mission's success in managing those issues has encouraged the return of the Ngok Dinka, with an estimated 15,000 returnees being assisted by the humanitarian community.

Secondly, criminality in and around the Amiet common market, which has become an important economic hub, has been shown to have the potential to exacerbate intercommunal tensions as the two communities mingle in the market and the surrounding areas. The spike in July and August in intercommunal violence related to the market has dropped sharply in the wake of UNISFA's proactive engagement in de-escalating tensions between the Ngok Dinka and Misseriya communities. Unfortunately, a few violent incidents have occurred since the publication of the Secretary-General's report (S/2017/870 and S/2017/870). On 13 October two Ngok Dinka died and three more were wounded at the Amiet common market after unknown armed assailants opened fire. UNISFA responded promptly with a pursuit and initial medical treatment. Thirdly, violence continues to be associated with petty crime, largely as a result of the adverse economic situation in the Abyei Area, where there is a lack of livelihood opportunities and a large presence of arms. And lastly, the presence of armed groups has the potential to influence and polarize communities, thereby inflaming intercommunal tensions.

While UNISFA operations have continued to enhance peace and stability within the Abyei Area, intercommunal tensions persist in the absence of progress in the implementation of the agreement of 20 June 2011. Disagreement on the joint interim institutions continues to hinder their establishment. The Abyei Joint Oversight Committee did not convene in the last week of July as was agreed on at its meeting in May. The African Union called for a follow-up meeting of the Committee in Addis Ababa on 16 August, but it was postponed the day before the scheduled date at the request of South Sudan, which cited the need to await the outcome of an expected meeting between the Presidents of South Sudan and the Sudan. The Presidents have been expected to meet since July, and that meeting is crucial, but a date has yet to be announced, although we hope it will be shortly, if not today. The efforts of the African Union continue, which has called for an extraordinary meeting of the Oversight Committee on 9 November.

The agreement of 30 July 2011 established the border monitoring and verification mission, and the

Cooperation agreement of 27 September 2012 on security arrangements operationalized the Joint Border Verification and Monitoring Mechanism. Nearly six years later, the Mechanism remains at an initial operating capability. Despite the lack of progress, both countries and the African Union view the Joint Border Verification and Monitoring Mechanism as essential and, in an important show of common purpose, jointly asked Council members to retain UNISFA's support to the Mechanism in their letter of 23 September.

In that context, I would like to share with the Council the progress made on the benchmarks for the full operating capability of the Joint Border Verification and Monitoring Mechanism , namely, the regular meetings of the Joint Political and Security Mechanism , the resumption of border demarcation discussions, the resolution of the dispute over the Safe Demilitarized Border Zone and full freedom of movement for Joint Border Verification and Monitoring Mechanism operations. With regard to the Joint Political and Security Mechanism, both parties have stated that concrete action could only follow the anticipated meeting of the Presidents. The meeting of the Joint Security Committee in early June did not take place, with mutual accusations of support for each other's rebel movements. The Committee was created to address exactly those kinds of disputes, which makes its current suspension particularly discouraging.

I also regret to report that border demarcation discussions have not resumed, nor have the documents for the non-binding opinion on disputed and claimed areas been handed over. However, in a positive step to advance the implementation of decisions taken at the latest meeting of the Joint Political and Security Mechanism, held in May, the parties participated in an initial joint aerial reconnaissance mission in September, facilitated by UNISFA, to identify temporary observation sites within the Safe Demilitarized Border Zone, in the vicinity of the agreed border crossing corridors. We hope that both parties can come together again to further the border demarcation discussions.

There continues to be an agreement on the centreline of the Safe Demilitarized Border Zone, a decision of the extraordinary meeting of the Joint Political and Security Mechanism in Addis Ababa on 14 October 2015, thereby providing the Joint Border Verification and Monitoring Mechanism with a defined area of operations. Since the latest resolution, there has been considerable progress in terms of full freedom of movement for Joint Border Verification and Monitoring Mechanism operations, with the helipad at Gok Machar now fully functional and expedited approval procedures in place to clear aerial patrols.

In conclusion, let me reiterate that UNISFA has clearly had a stabilizing role in Abyei and along the border region between the Sudan and South Sudan. Neither the Abyei Area nor the border area have seen any major confrontation between the forces of the two countries. I urge both Governments to consolidate the gains achieved by UNISFA at the local level by actively engaging in discussions to resolve the deadlock over establishing the temporary arrangements that should lead to determining the final status of Abyei.

Progress on the operationalization of the Joint Border Verification and Monitoring Mechanism remains dependent upon the active collaboration of the parties, and is yet to meet all the benchmarks set by the Secretary-General to proceed to full operating capability. Both countries pledged to address challenges facing the Mechanism in the joint letter of 23 September I mentioned, highlighting the importance of the Joint Border Verification and Monitoring Mechanism as a confidence-building measure. In that context, we encourage the parties to use the mechanisms they have established to address their security issues and normalize their relations.

In that regard, it is imperative to preserve the achievements of relative stability realized through the work of UNISFA, both towards maintaining peace and stability in the Abyei Area and in preventing confrontations along the Sudan-South Sudan border area. Bearing that in mind, I would like to echo the recommendations of the Secretary-General for the Security Council to extend UNISFA's mandate for an additional six months.

**The President** (*spoke in French*): I thank Mr. Zouev for his briefing.

I now give the floor to Mr. Haysom.

**Mr. Haysom**: I thank you, Mr. President, for this opportunity to brief the Security Council on progress in the implementation of resolution 2046 (2012), which concerns outstanding bilateral issues between the Sudan and South Sudan and the conflict in the states of South Kordofan and Blue Nile.

As relations between the two countries have continued to be tense, it was hoped that the meeting

between Presidents Al-Bashir and Kiir that was planned to take place in Khartoum during the reporting period would provide guidance on the way forward, at least on the stalled implementation of the 2012 agreements. But that meeting did not materialize, at least during the reporting period.

The internal conflicts in the Sudan and South Sudan, coupled with the mistrust between the two countries, have continued to impede the proper implementation of the agreements and the normalization of their bilateral relations. At the extraordinary meeting of the Joint Political and Security Mechanism, held in Addis Ababa from 14 to 15 May, both Governments recommitted to the resumption of regular meetings and to the implementation of the decisions taken at their last meeting, held in Khartoum a year earlier.

However, the ordinary meeting of the Joint Political and Security Mechanism agreed to be held at the end of June did not take place, after both Governments once again exchanged accusations of harbouring each other's rebels. An extraordinary Joint Political and Security Mechanism meeting convened by the African Union High-level Implementation Panel is expected to take place on 1 November. In my engagement with the Governments of the Sudan and South Sudan, I have reiterated that the agreements on security arrangements and border issues cannot be implemented without regular meetings of the Joint Political and Security Mechanism, the main bilateral mechanism empowered to take decisions regarding security and the border.

The monitoring of the border remains critical to peace efforts, as border violations have the potential to be a flashpoint of military confrontation between the countries. In line with the July 2011 agreement on the border monitoring support mission, both sides acknowledge the importance of border monitoring. If fully implemented, the Joint Border Verification and Monitoring Mechanism can help them prevent violations and cross-border incursions by armed groups, contain the cross-border circulation of weapons and assist in building mutual trust, particularly in the light of the mutual accusations of harbouring rebels. It can also serve to protect the flanks of the Abyei Area.

While there has been limited progress on security and border issues, the Governments of the Sudan and South Sudan have continued to show more appetite for sustained bilateral cooperation in the oil sector. In September, the Ministers of Petroleum of the two countries agreed in Khartoum on the resumption of oil production in the Unity state oilfields, which had stopped with the outbreak of the war in 2013. The Sudan would provide technical assistance and electricity and accommodate oil workers at its base camp in Heglig.

In line with the agreement on trade and trade-related Issues, the two Governments agreed in September to boost border trade and approved the export of 54 Sudanese products to South Sudan through five border crossing points yet to be identified. It is expected that a meeting of customs and immigration officials will be organized to operationalize the agreement, while the branch of the Sudan's central bank at Kosti has been identified to facilitate transactions. The contemplated Joint Political and Security Mechanism meeting at the end of this month is intended to expedite the establishment of the first crossing points.

The Sudan also continued to facilitate the provision of humanitarian aid to South Sudan by allowing the World Food Programme to deliver food assistance on 5 October to Aweil.

With the lifting of United States sanctions on the Sudan, South Sudan has expressed interest in a joint approach to the international community, including a creditor outreach strategy arrangement as contemplated in the agreement on economic matters, which has not yet been implemented. In my future engagement with the Governments of the Sudan and South Sudan, I will encourage them to build on their sustained cooperation on oil and their interest in enhancing their economic and commercial cooperation to implement the agreements on security arrangements and border issues in the same spirit.

Since the independence of South Sudan, the most prominent outstanding territorial issue between the Sudan and South Sudan has been the question of sovereignty over the Abyei Area. After an interval that followed the upsurge in violence in Abyei in 2011, resulting in the displacement of the population there, and following the independence of South Sudan later that year, the Security Council adopted resolution 2046 (2012), which urges the parties to cease all hostilities and withdraw their forces. The main concern of the members of the Security Council then was to avoid the risk of greater conflagration and, in the words of the United States representative,

> "returning to the horrors of the past and [taking] the entire region with them" (*S/PV.6764, p. 1*).

Today, thanks notably to the sustained and fruitful efforts of the United Nations Interim Security Force for Abyei (UNISFA), for which Ethiopia should be commended, the risk of relapse into conflict between the Sudan and South Sudan is low. The stabilizing role of UNISFA, described in detail in the briefing by my colleague Assistant Secretary-General Alexander Zouev, should inform any decision the international community takes regarding Abyei and the Joint Border Verification and Monitoring Mechanism. The conflict prevention and mitigation strategy adopted by UNISFA and its engagement with both communities to foster dialogue and reconciliation have also been critical in averting an escalation of tensions.

In my view, the enabling role of UNISFA is crucial for any future progress on the implementation of the transitional agreements and the arrangements on the border, as well as the resumption of talks about the final status of Abyei. In my continuous engagement with the Governments of the Sudan and South Sudan, I have urged them to build on the relative improvement in their relationship, including through bilateral meetings between President Al-Bashir and President Kiir, to take concrete measures to achieve progress on the joint administration of Abyei and to resume discussions about its final status.

Turning my attention to the conflict in South Kordofan and Blue Nile, if fully implemented, the road map agreement brokered last year by the African Union High-level Implementation Panel can lay the ground for lasting peace in the Sudan, as it contemplates a comprehensive solution to the conflicts in Darfur and the two areas through peace negotiations and national political dialogue resulting in a new, inclusive social contract.

Humanitarian aid delivery to the territories under the control of the Sudan People's Liberation Movement-North (SPLM-N) remains a major contentious issue and a road block between the Government of the Sudan and the SPLM-N. The Government of the Sudan has reiterated readiness to implement the so-called United States proposal on humanitarian access, which consists of the United States delivering medicine from within the Sudan to South Kordofan Blue Nile states by air. The new SPLM-N leadership stated that the position of the Movement on the matter has not changed and that it sticks to the delivery of a certain percentage of the humanitarian assistance directly from a neighbouring country to the areas under its control. In my future engagement with the parties, I intend to urge them to build on the current unilateral cessation of hostilities declared by both sides in the two areas and to resume talks on the basis of the United States proposal on humanitarian assistance, under the auspices of the High-level Implementation Panel.

**The President** (*spoke in French*): I thank Mr. Haysom for his briefing.

I shall now give the floor to those members of the Council who wish to make statements.

**Mr. Bermúdez** (Uruguay) (*spoke in Spanish*): At the outset, I would like to express our gratitute for the briefings by Mr. Alexander Zouev, Assistant Secretary-General for Rule of Law and Security Institutions of the Department of Peacekeeping Operations, and Mr. Nicholas Haysom, Special Envoy of the Secretary-General for the Sudan and South Sudan.

I shall focus my statement on two points: first, specificallly on the work of the United Nations Interim Security Force for Abyei (UNISFA); and secondly, the lack of concrete headway in implementing the agreements of 2011 and 2012 intended to resolve the conflict over the status of Abyei.

There can be no doubt that, since its establishment in 2011 and to date, UNISFA has played a stabilizing role in Abyei and along the entire border between the Sudan and South Sudan, as clearly pointed out in the report (S/2017/870) of the Secretary-General's report. Although some violent incidents have been reported over the past few months, the security situation in the Abyei Area has remained relatively calm, to a great extent thanks to the role played by UNISFA. Nevertheless, it is worth highlighting that the situation remains unstable due to the lack of progress made in the political process. In that regard, I would like to express our gratitude for the work of UNISFA. Thanks to its proactive stance and unflagging support for mediation initiatives and political dialogue, the mission has contributed enormously to the fact that there have been no major clashes between the armed forces of the two countries in the Abyei Area since 2011. In short, UNISFA has fulfilled the role that was expected of it — that is, establishing a secure environment in which the Sudan and South Sudan can resolve their differences through dialogue.

However, the peacekeeping mission has been hamstrung in achieving its full potential as a result of

the glaring lack of willingness to compromise by both parties to the conflict, which have not only incessantly put obstacles in the way of UNISFA's work, but have also failed to show tangible progress in implementing the agreements of 2011 and 2012, aimed at achieving a lasting solution to the status of Abyei.

That leads me to my second point, namely, to reiterate the primary responsibility borne by the Governments of the Sudan and South Sudan to fulfil the commitments they themselves undertook in those agreements. However much support the international community might offer the parties — as it has done throughout the years, in particular through the United Nations and the African Union — we reiterate that the responsibility for showing real progress in resolving the conflict lies primarily with both Governments.

We take note of the point made by Mr. Moussa Faki Mahamat, Chairperson of the African Union Commission, in his communication dated 23 October, where he referred to the latest efforts to convene meetings of the various mechanisms established under the 2011 and 2012 agreements, including the Abyei Joint Oversight Committee and the Joint Political and Security Mechanism. In that connection, we urge the Governments of the Sudan and South Sudan to take advantage of the mechanisms that have been established to resolve outstanding issues and to implement the decisions taken. That is vital in order to promote good-neighbourly relations and avoid a relapse into conflict.

In conclusion, allow me to recall that resolution 2352 (2017), which the Security Council adopted in May and which set out the current mandate of UNISFA, is a conditional resolution. Through the resolution, it was decided that the continuation of UNISFA support tasks with regard to the Joint Border Verification and Monitoring Mechanism would end with that extension unless both parties demonstrated, via their actions, clear commitment and firm assurances for operationalizing the Mechanism. UNISFA's mandate expires in mid-November, which is why I repeat here what we stated at the time of the adoption of resolution 2352 (2017):

> "[l]et me clearly reaffirm that the future of this peacekeeping mission is now exclusively in the hands of the Governments of the Sudan and South Sudan." (*S/PV.7939, p. 6*)

**Mr. Llorentty Solíz** (Plurinational State of Bolivia) (*spoke in Spanish*): Bolivia is grateful to the French presidency for convening this briefing. It has been a long time since the Security Council held a public meeting on the situation in Abyei, and this format makes it possible for the entire membership to learn in greater detail about the work being done in the Area by the United Nations Interim Security Force for Abyei (UNISFA). We also thank Assistant Secretary-General Alexander Zouev and Special Envoy Nicholas Haysom for the important information they have shared with us today.

Bolivia believes that the current state of relative stability in Abyei is a reflection of the efficient work of UNISFA, which is as important for the Sudan as it is for South Sudan, given the difficult time that the latter is experiencing due to the civil war afflicting the country. In that connection, we would like to commend the Ethiopian troops as well as United Nations personnel for their great work in Abyei.

Although we acknowledge the stability in the Area, we also recognize that the political, humanitarian and security situations continue to pose challenges. UNISFA responds where it can, but its abilities to respond are limited by various factors outside of its control. It is clear to us that it is up to the Governments of both countries to make headway in the development of measures allowing for the implementation of the 2011 agreement and the final status of the Area.

In that connection, we underscore the good offices role played by UNISFA in terms of mediation to encourage dialogue and rekindle the political process between both countries, as well as to promote understanding and reconciliation between the Misseriya and Ngok Dinka communities. The coexistence of those two communities, whether through commercial activities or the setting up of community protection committees, helps to establish the bonds of trust that are fundamental among the inhabitants of the Area.

Although the security situation is relatively stable, it continues to be unpredictable. Despite the reduction in the number of violent incidents in comparison with the period covered by the present report (S/2017/870) of the Secretary-General), and taking into account the update provided by the Assistant-Secretary-General at this meeting, we must continue working to further reduce the tensions in the Amiet common market. As we know, it is the economic heart of the Area and helps to improve the relationship between the parties.

As reported by the Secretary-General, there are many needs that must be met to provide humanitarian aid. The arrival of displaced persons from South Sudan has led to an urgent situation that UNISFA and other humanitarian actors are struggling to grapple with. There are still problems in terms of access to education, health, safe drinking water and food security. Headway needs to be made in consolidating the institutions that should properly administer the Area and guarantee the provision of basic services to the people of Abyei. UNISFA cannot, and should not, substitute the role that the State.

Despite the problems being experienced, we underscore the fact that educational activities are currently under way to provide training to mitigate the risks posed by explosive remnants of war. Such efforts, which have reached almost 65,000 Abyei inhabitants, constitute an important component in establishing lasting peace in the Area. Moreover, we would highlight the joint work of UNISFA and the United Nations Mine Action Service to confiscate and destroy weapons, detect and eliminate explosive munitions and destroy explosive remnants of war along priority routes. The two latter are essential for delineating the terrain coordinates of border transport corridors.

In a joint letter we received on 23 September, the Governments of the Sudan and South Sudan publicly expressed their willingness to implement resolutions 1990 (2011) and 2352 (2017). That seems to us a positive sign of the rapprochement between the two parties, but it is vital that this commitment be put into practice. We hope that these issues will be the subject of consensus at the summit between the Presidents of the Sudan and South Sudan, which we hope will take place as soon as possible. We urge the parties to demonstrate leadership and political determination to move forward with serious negotiations that will ensure the operationalization of the Joint Border Verification and Monitoring Mechanism, as called for in resolution 2352 (2017), as well as determine the final status of the Area in line with the 2011 agreement.

Finally, we see that there are still many challenges to overcome in Abyei. We hope that the Security Council will remain unified on this issue, while listening to the positions of the parties involved, the troop-contributing country, regional organizations and the Secretariat. We must not lose sight of our principal mandate and continue to work to help these countries achieve peace, stability and well-being for their inhabitants.

**The President** (*spoke in French*): I now give the floor to the representative of the Sudan.

**Mr. Mohamed** (Sudan) (*spoke in Arabic*): I would like to take this opportunity to congratulate you, Sir, on your presidency of the Security Council this month and I wish you every success. Moreover, I would like to pay tribute to your predecessor, the Permanent Representative of Ethiopia, for his wise stewardship of the Council's proceedings in the past month. Through you as President of the Security Council, as well as through the President of the General Assembly and the Secretary-General, I would also like to offer to the Government and the people of Chad our deepest condolences for the death of the Chadian peacekeepers in northern Mali.

I also take this opportunity to renew Sudan's commitment to cooperate with the United Nations Interim Security Force for Abyei (UNISFA) in order to enable it to carry out its mandate set out in resolution 1990 (2011). I express my thanks and appreciation to His Excellency the Secretary-General and we thank him for the Report on the situation in Abyei (see S/2017/870) presented to the Council. I thank Mr. Alexander Zuev, Assistant Secretary-General for Rule of Law and Security Institutions in the Department of Peacekeeping Operations and the Special Envoy for Sudan and South Sudan, Mr. Haysom, for their briefings.

I would like to reaffirm the security stability that Abyei is experiencing and the progress that has been achieved in enhancing the principles of peaceful coexistence between the Messiria and the Ngok, which has been confirmed in the Report presented today (S/2017/870) as well as in all of the reports presented to the Council during the past period. This stability is a direct result of the extensive governmental and social efforts that have been made in addition to the positive role that UNISFA plays and has always played since its creation.

The Government of Sudan confirms its commitment to all of the agreements signed with the Republic of South Sudan, starting with the Abyei Protocol of 2004, the Agreement between the Government of the Republic of the Sudan and the Sudan People's Liberation Movement on temporary arrangements for the administration and security of the Abyei Area, which we signed on 20 June 2011 and the Cooperation Agreement between the two States, signed on 27 September 2012.

Here we call upon our brothers and sisters in the Government of South Sudan to enhance their serious engagement with the Government of Sudan and the African Union in order to speed up the process of forming the Abyei institutions stipulated by the 20 June 2011 Agreement in order to determine the final status of Abyei. This is truly and only in the hands of the Presidents of Sudan and South Sudan, according to the agreements signed between the two countries.

My delegation reaffirms its position that the path towards sustainable peace and stability in Abyei and throughout the border area between Sudan and South Sudan is based on two main elements, namely the implementation of both the Agreement of 20 June 2011 and of all points contained in the Cooperation Agreement signed between Sudan and South Sudan on 27 September 2012.

The Agreement of 20 June 2011 stipulates the formation of a joint administration for Abyei as well as a joint legislative council and a joint police force. These are basic institutions that are indispensable to the management of the area and in offering the necessary services to its citizens, as well as enhancing peaceful coexistence betweent the different social elements. There is also a need to create the necessary conditions in order to peacefully establish a final status for Abyei based on the 2004 Abyei Protocol. This Protocol stipulates holding a joint referendum in a manner that meets the aspirations of all stakeholders by finding a win-win formula that satisfies everyone.

Furthermore, the Cooperation Agreement has established strong foundations for the normalization of ties between Sudan and South Sudan and to enhance the level of cooperation between the two States in all aspects. It also stipulates the need for sustained peace between them.

The Agreement covers vital areas that are important to the present and future relationship between the two countries, such as oil, trade, debt, borders, security arrangements, citizen affairs and other important matters. However, the lack of enthusiasm among our brothers in South Sudan for implementing all of those points, with the exception of the oil agreement, has prevented the achievement of the desired results. My delegation hopes that the Government of the Republic of South Sudan will fulfil its pledges to implement all of these agreements, especially the agreement on security arrangements and all its facets.

Everyone, especially the members of the Security Council, knows that meeting security needs in any situation must come before meeting economic and other goals, as explicitly stated in resolution 2046 (2012), adopted in May 2012. It will require broadening the horizons of the relations between the two States in a manner that would guarantee cooperation, rise above any disaccord and fulfil the aspirations of the two sisterly nations to achieving peace, stability and development, as good neighbours.

My country confirms that the Sudan has never been the cause of obstacles to the work of the Joint Border Verification and Monitoring Mechanism or to restrict its movements. My delegation believes that the Mechanism is important to ensuring lasting peace along the joint borders of the Sudan and South Sudan, and must be maintained and activated in order to normalize ties between the two States. As Council members will recall, at the most recent meeting of the joint political and security mechanism between the Sudan and South Sudan, held on 14 and 15 May in Addis Ababa, stressed the centrality of the Joint Border Verification and Monitoring Mechanism:

(*spoke in English*)

> "The joint political and security mechanism stressed the centrality of the Joint Border Verification and Monitoring Mechanism for the peace and security of the Sudan and South Sudan. They pointed out that the absence of the Joint Border Verification and Monitoring Mechanism would be detrimental to and have detrimental effects on stability along the border and within both countries as a whole. In that regard, the meeting resolved that the parties must urgently take practical steps to activate the Joint Border Verification and Monitoring Mechanism and facilitate its work."

(*spoke in Arabic*)

Moreover, the Sudan and South Sudan, as well as other relevant parties, have worked together since the Council's meeting in May. The Foreign Ministers of both countries sent a joint letter to the Council on 23 September in which they reaffirmed both countries' commitments to the activation of the Joint Border and Verification Monitoring Mechanism. Furthermore, both countries dispatched aerial patrols to the Mechanism and patrols in the four border crossing areas that were agreed upon for activation. In addition, an invitation was sent out for the meeting of the joint political and

security mechanism. It was also agreed to conduct the long-awaited visit by His Excellency President Salva Kiir Mayardit of South Sudan to Khartoum on Tuesday, 31 October. We hope that the meeting will result in the necessary progress in regard to the issues that remain outstanding between the two countries.

While we understand the concerns of those calling to end UNISFA support for the operational activities of the Joint Border Verification and Monitoring Mechanism, we believe that the Mechanism is indispensable to maintaining stability in Abyei and along the border with South Sudan. Ending UNISFA support for the operational activities of the Mechanism could lead to developments that would threaten the gains that have been made through the joint efforts of all concerned — including the Security Council, which has endorsed the Mechanism — and reignite tensions. It would be tantamount to a collective punishment of those who have met their obligations and of those who have not, and of civilians in both countries. We therefore see little justification for ending support for those activities.

We believe that the way to revitalize and reanimate those activities is for the Council and the entire international community to make an extra effort to enhance dialogue and encourage both countries to fulfil their obligations in regard to creating a buffer demilitarized border zone and to removing all obstacles to the Joint Border Verification and Monitoring Mechanism. I confirm the full commitment and willingness of the Government of the Sudan to do its part to activate the Mechanism and implement the agreement on security arrangements of 27 September 2012 and other agreements signed with the Republic of South Sudan.

In conclusion, I would like to offer my sincere thanks and gratitude to all of our partners whose efforts facilitate UNISFA's work, in particular the Government of Ethiopia, the Peace and Security Council of the African Union, the African Union Commission and the African Union High-level Implementation Panel for the Sudan and South Sudan, as well as the Special Envoy of the Secretary-General for the Sudan and South Sudan. We also reiterate the Sudan's commitment to cooperating with UNISFA in fulfilling all its duties unhindered, pursuant to resolution 1990 (2011) and subsequent relevant resolutions.

**The President** (*spoke in French*): I now give the floor to the representative of South Sudan.

**Mr. Malwal** (South Sudan): Mr. President, we are delighted and honoured to speak before the Security Council for the second time under your leadership.

My delegation would like to join in expressing our condolences to the people and the Government of Chad for the untimely death of their troops. I would also like to acknowledge the Assistant Secretary-General for Rule of Law and Security Institutions, Mr. Alexander Zouev, and Mr. Nicholas Haysom, Special Envoy of the Secretary-General for the Sudan and South Sudan, both of whom are here with us today.

My delegation welcomes the report of the Secretary-General on the situation in Abyei (S/2017/870) and the progress in the implementation of the mandate of the United Nations Interim Security Force for Abyei (UNISFA). My delegation accepts the report, not only for its comprehensiveness but, more importantly, for the glimmer of hope for what could happen to the people of Abyei if the international community could build on the current relative tranquility that the report talks about.

My delegation would be remiss if we did not pay a well-deserved tribute to the Ethiopian men and women of UNISFA in general, and in particular to the Government of the Federal Democratic Republic of Ethiopia, for their unwavering commitment to keeping peace and harmony among the people of Abyei. As the report conveys, it is the creativity of the Ethiopian troops in Abyei that has brought relative peace to the Area. As we appreciate their commitment to and sacrifices for the people of Abyei, we would like to appeal to the international community to maintain the much-needed support for those troops.

We would also like to thank the Council for the positive role and attention that it continues to pay to the issue of Abyei. Needless to say, its continued engagement will be crucial until the case of Abyei is positively resolved to the satisfaction of both countries.

In that regard, I would like to reiterate South Sudan's commitment to engaging the Republic of the Sudan in renewed efforts towards finding an agreed solution to the issue of Abyei. Such renewed engagement was conveyed to the Council in the joint letter that was sent by the Foreign Ministers of South Sudan and the Sudan on 23 September. I would like to remind the Council that, in that letter, both Ministers stated:

> "We would like to reconfirm to you our resolve to remove the obstacles and address challenges facing the operationalization of the Joint Border Verification and Monitoring Mechanism. We would like to affirm to you our readiness to uphold the commitments we made in the Agreement on the Border Monitoring Support Mission of 2011 and the Agreement on Security Arrangements of 2012, and to hold the meetings of the joint political and security mechanism, and the joint security mechanism, and begin a political process to unlock the deadlock on Abyei and the borders, as urged by Security Council resolution 2352 (2017)."

In the spirit of the aforementioned letter and as the report of the Secretary-General notes, South Sudan has granted the operations of the Joint Border Verification and Monitoring Mechanism full freedom of movement. The helipad at Gok Machar is now fully functional and expedited approval procedures to clear flights for the Mechanism's aerial patrols have been granted. The report further notes that the cancellation rate for aerial patrols is at its lowest since its establishment in 2013, having decreased from 56 per cent to 22 per cent, and that many of those cancellations mentioned were due to bad weather. The report also notes the positive progress made towards full operational capacity of the Mechanism. Both parties have accepted the proposal of the United Nations Interim Security Force for Abyei (UNISFA) to establish four temporary observation sites within the Safe Demilitarized Border Zone and sent their respective monitors to start a joint reconnaissance mission with UNISFA to identify the four temporary observation sites.

All of that demonstrates significant progress and the commitment of South Sudan to making the mandate of UNISFA, and in particular the Joint Border Verification and Monitoring Mechanism, functional. The Republic of South Sudan appreciates the role of the Mechanism in maintaining the effective operations of UNISFA, which in turn sustain harmonious coexistence in the area. Moreover, we are happy to report that there is serious and credible information that the expected visit of President Salva Kiir Mayardit to Khartoum will finally take place in the next few days.

Realistically, we must admit that there are serious differences between the two countries, and the aforementioned activities cannot replace the final resolution of the Abyei issue. In that regard, while we see the call to establish interim administrative structures in Abyei, we feel that it has been superseded by many events. Rather, we stand for a final settlement of the Abyei matter on the basis of African Union High-level Implementation Panel's proposal of 21 September 2013, which the African Union Peace and Security Council has accepted a number of times and for which it sought the support of the Security Council in its communiqué of 26 October 2013.

Finally, as the Council knows, serious differences on such a historic dispute usually take a long time to settle. We would like to appeal to the international community through the Security Council that in order to build on the limited peace and tranquility achieved so far by the Ethiopian peacekeepers, as the report indicates, certain fundamental humanitarian and social services ought to be provided for the people of Abyei. We appreciate the various early recovery and transition activities mentioned in the report, which include the rehabilitation of the Abyei Referral Hospital, the Abyei Women's Centre and the various livelihood ventures targeting young people and women. We encourage more such ventures, as providing livelihood for the young people of Abyei will help reduce the criminality that is caused by the economic situation.

**The President** (*spoke in French*): There are no more names inscribed on the list of speakers.

I now invite Council members to informal consultations to continue our discussion on the subject.

*The meeting rose at 4.35 p.m.*